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IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHAD SITUATION

Introduction

Now that the French have intervened in force, the conflict in Chad is entering a new phase that is likely to prove particularly vexing to US policymakers. Given the relative balance between the opposing forces in Chad, the most likely scenario is for a protracted stand-off during which the French and the Libyans try to work out an agreement that leaves the country temporarily partitioned, provides for the pull-back of some of the foreign forces and leaves for later a political solution within the context of the OAU or--less likely--under international auspices.

A much less likely scenario is a dramatic escalation of the fighting, resulting in a decisive victory for the Libyan-backed Goukouni forces.* Such a development could be set into motion by a serious military miscalculation on the part of the French or, more likely, by a quixotic counteroffensive by Habre, against the advice and without the support of the French.

Even under the best of situations, Chad will be a long-term problem for US policymakers for several reasons. First, short of a sound military defeat at the hands of the French or a major loss of political control at home, Qadhafi will not give up his goal of ousting Habre and installing a regime in N'Djamena that will accede to his claim to the Aouzou Strip and permit him the use of eastern Chad as a springboard for subversion into Sudan. Second, Chad's history of civil war and failed alliances strongly suggests that there is virtually no chance of a lasting reconciliation between Habre and Goukouni. A government of national unity led by those men would only become a new arena in their long-standing power struggle. A Habre government in N'Djamena will be a continuing target for subversion by Qadhafi and whatever Chadian dissidents he can muster. Third, France and the US have different interests in Chad and different perceptions of the role of Western military power in that country. Finally, the Africans (and to a lesser extent the Arabs) are divided over Chad and unlikely to be of much assistance either individually or collectively through the OAU in furthering US objectives regarding Chad.

* Obviously a Habre/French victory would be a positive solution from a US standpoint and thus is not discussed in this paper.

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In the following sections we address the ramifications of the above contingencies on specific areas of interest to US foreign policy.

A Protracted Stand-Off

Over the short term, neither Qadhafi nor Goukouni will feel bound by a cease-fire agreement or the outcome of any political negotiations that appear to be going against Goukouni's quest for international legitimacy as president of Chad. Qadhafi will try to make the most of the limited success he has achieved in northern Chad by strengthening Goukouni's military posture and by portraying Libya's role as an attempt to help a rightful ruler regain his capital against neo-colonialist intervention.

If the current crisis ends in a de facto partition of Chad, the Africans will welcome the respite but will do all they can to ensure that the partition does not become permanent. All Africans agree to the inviolability of national boundaries but not all agree on the question of who should govern Chad. Although last year's OAU summit recognized Habre as Chad's legitimate leader, the present conflict has prompted enough African governments to reconsider their positions that efforts at an African solution through the OAU could become protracted and rancorous. OAU chairman Mengistu already has slanted his approach to the problem in favor of Goukouni and Qadhafi and will be a serious impediment to an African consensus. Thus, the Chad question could become as intractable and as long-running as the Western Sahara problem.

Most Arab states will be pleased by any outcome in Chad that leaves Qadhafi frustrated and Habre in power. The Sudanese, who rightly feel most threatened by Libya, will hope that any step up in Libyan aid to dissidents opposed to President Nimeiri will be postponed by Qadhafi's need to focus resources on Chad. Egypt and Saudi Arabia will be pleased by the belated French intervention and may credit the US for encouraging it. The Maghreb states, which Qadhafi is currently courting, will also be privately pleased to see him bogged down in Chad. Only Syria and possibly South Yemen will back Libya actively in diplomatic maneuvers over Chad and neither will offer any meaningful military support.

Habre's survivability depends ultimately on the depth of the French commitment to him, which is not likely to persist if he rejects French advice. France's primary concern is to provide sufficient aid within the limits of its agreement with Chad to demonstrate to other African clients that Paris honors its security pacts. Another aim was probably to preempt any US unilateral military moves in Francophone Africa. As the crisis unfolded, it also became apparent that only French military force in Chad would stop Qadhafi. The sending of French ground troops and the appointment of General Poli as commander indicate a belated French decision to stop the Libyan advance.

If the French can arrange a settlement with Libya that leaves Chad temporarily partitioned, provides for the withdrawal of some of the foreign forces, and leaves the terms of reunification of Chad for later solution, this will be considered a satisfactory solution by a large number, perhaps a majority, of Frenchmen.

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A protracted stalemate with French ground forces holding positions to deter Libyan-Goukouni attacks would clearly be less acceptable to the French public, but would be preferable to an escalation of the conflict that could result in French casualties. There is virtually no chance now of a major defeat of the French and Habre forces, because of the size and depth of French commitment and France's firm warning to the Libyans.

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Paris, essentially, is committed to a stabilization of the military situation in Chad and an eventual political solution. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Hence, the French are likely to accept whatever government emerges in Chad, rationalizing that they will be able to influence it and that the French-Chad link will remain intact. Thus, while the French will maintain a military presence in Chad, it is questionable how much they would support Habre in the political and diplomatic arenas, and we are doubtful that they would support him militarily if he embarked on new military adventures or was forced back into his former rebel status. Indeed, one of the major problems Paris will face during a protracted negotiating process will be restraining Habre from rash military actions that would widen rather than contain the conflict. Neither Habre nor his troops are likely to accept any prolonged partition that leaves his northern homeland in Goukouni's control. If internal bickering and in-fighting among the Chadian armed forces and civilian politicians resulted in the end of the Habre government, French interests would not have suffered much.

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Downfall of the Habre Regime

Given the questions about France's willingness and the Africans' ability to support Habre, his continued tenure as president cannot be guaranteed. Should he attempt to retake northern Chad he would do so against French advice and without French backing and most likely would be defeated. In that case, the French position might be strengthened if it made Habre more pliable or removed him entirely.

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If Goukouni were to gain control of Chad, the problems of restoring order and subduing local warlords, perhaps including a rebellious Habre as well, would require a Libyan occupation force for some time. The financial, logistical, and manpower demands would be formidable and might limit somewhat Qadhafi's capabilities to cause trouble elsewhere. Qadhafi probably would not wait for Goukouni to become firmly established before turning his attentions elsewhere, however.

Qadhafi certainly will be tempted to renew his efforts to destabilize Sudan at an early stage. With a dependent Goukouni in N'Djamena, his access to eastern Chad would be improved.

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The Sudanese inhabitants of Darfur province, adjoining Chad, have long been neglected by Khartoum. Their grievances could readily be exploited by Libyan-trained agents and armed bands from Chad at a time when Nimeiri is beset by internal problems.

Considering the weakness of the Sudanese military, the vast distances in Sudan and the lack of modern infrastructure or military access facilities in western Sudan, a Chadian-based insurgency will be difficult to counter. It is virtually certain that in such circumstances Nimeiri will make impassioned appeals for US help in addition to whatever assistance Egypt and Saudi Arabia, who would both be concerned over the projection of Libyan power into Sudan,

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would furnish. Cairo, deeply committed to Nimeiri's survival, will press hard for stepped up US aid to Khartoum and might even be willing to send its own forces to Sudan to bolster Nimeiri should that be required. The US could not count on French leverage on a Chadian government to stem the flow of subversion from eastern Chad. The French do not regard Sudan as their problem and, depending on the outcome of the current Chad crisis, might not feel kindly disposed toward US requests for support.

Zairian President Mobutu sent his forces to Chad to show his firm opposition to Libyan aggression, to demonstrate his importance among African chiefs, and to try to get more US aid. A prolonged Zairian troop presence in Chad, particularly if his troops were exposed to danger, would make him question the profitability of supporting Western interests elsewhere in Africa, either militarily or diplomatically. He would also press his Western supporters--particularly the US--for increased military and financial assistance, and the US could expect strains in our relations with Mobutu if we did not respond in a manner the Zairian leader deemed satisfactory.

The Soviet Dimension

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The Soviets see advantages for themselves in any outcome of the Chad crisis that includes a Libyan presence there, and will hail such an event as a defeat for Western interventionists, and perhaps as a victory for progressive elements in Chad. To the extent that Western prestige suffers, that France and the US quarrel, or that Western commitments to African and Arab clients are weakened, it will be advantageous to the USSR. And if the result of the Libyan intervention in Chad is to radicalize other regimes in the area, that too will be a plus for Moscow.

If Qadhafi emerges from the Chad crisis with the appearance of having gained prestige or territory, he can count on subsequent Soviet support for his further ambitions in the area. Libyan destabilization efforts against Sudan or the pro-Western states in West and Central Africa would be generally pleasing to Moscow. The USSR will keep Qadhafi supplied with military equipment, but will continue to do so on commercial terms, and are likely, as usual, to take a tough bargaining position.

In the event of a protracted political process, the Soviets are likely to continue the low key public stance they have maintained during the crisis. They will not want to get out in front of the Africans on any debate over a Chadian solution. In addition, they are wary of Qadhafi's erratic and

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unpredictable ventures in foreign policy, over which they have no control. The Soviets are leery of close association with another adventure in which Qadhafi might lose badly.

The Soviets will see only a few negative features in a Chadian solution in which Libya gains something. They are hopeful of regaining influence in Cairo, and will view a renewed Libyan destabilization program against Sudan as possibly damaging their efforts to wean Mubarak away from the West. But, Soviet attempts to rebuild influence in Egypt have not been very successful so far, and Moscow may see an enhanced Libyan role in Chad that threatens Nimeiri as a sufficient gain in the long run to offset a failure to win over the Egyptians.

The Soviets would not particularly care to see an escalation of the war in Chad. This would bring new Libyan demands for resupply and logistical assistance within Chad and might result in a more overt Soviet military presence in hostilities against French forces. It might also result in a greater US presence to the area and more US commitments to pro-Western governments threatened by Libyan subversion. It is unlikely that Andropov, with his problems at home and in dealing with INF and other thorny issues will welcome a flare up in the Sahara, in which an overly ambitious and overly extended Libya gets into a confrontation with France and the United States.

Nonetheless, the general prospects of a limited Libyan success in Chad will be positive in Moscow's view. In addition to the possibilities of radicalizing a number of moderate states, the Chadian crisis will have produced some substantial benefits at little cost. At the least, the affair has created some tensions between France and the United States that could continue as the situation evolves and may have weakened the confidence of a number of Third World leaders in Western security guarantees.

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Annex

A Chadian Chronology

Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries	France conquers the area; political and economic power is centered in the south, based on new cotton farming.
1960	Formal independence, with the north remaining under French military control.
1964	France withdraws from the north.
1966	Frolinat, a northern-based liberation movement, is formed to resist repressive measures by President Tombalbaye.
1968	France sends in air force units against Frolinat, under 1964 defense agreement.
1969	France sends in 1,600 man ground force.
1971	Libya recognizes Frolinat.
1972	Libyan-French agreement, by which Libya ends support of Frolinat.
1973	Tombalbaye agrees to Libyan "annexation" of Aozou Strip of northern Chad.
1975	Tobalbaye killed in a coup; General Malloum seeks reconciliation with Frolinat.
1976	Frolinat splits between pro-Western Habre and nationalist Goukouni; Chad and France sign a military agreement.
1978	Habre joins Malloum in the government; Habre and Goukouni are reconciled and Frolinat advances on N'Djamena; France sends 2,500 troops to support the government.
1979	Habre, Malloum and Goukouni are reconciled, but split; OAU names Goukouni as transitional president.
1980	Habre-Goukouni civil war; Goukouni calls in Libyan troops; Libya-Chad merger announced.
1981	Libyans withdraw and OAU sends in peacekeeping force.

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- 1982 Habre, backed by Egypt and Sudan, advances on N'Djamena; OAU force takes no action; France at first backs Goukouni; Habre chases Goukouni out of N'Djamena, and is recognized by OAU as President.
- 1983 Border clashes between Nigeria and Chad in April - June Goukouni advances into Chad from the north with Libyan backing. Zaire sends troops to support Habre. France sends military equipment, and eventually, troops and planes.

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